

THE EARLY MINISTRY OF JOHN CRAIG AT ST. GILES' 1562-1566

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AT the General Assembly of 1958, among the matters submitted was that of the "*Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism.*" In this detailed work, the name of John Craig leaps into prominence, he being of the number of those eminent preachers of the first Reformation century in Scotland, who taught the classical Reformed doctrine; others being John Davidson and Robert Bruce, and Professors Rollock, Boyd and Forbes.¹ Craig was both churchman and theologian, for eleven years the colleague of Knox at St. Giles', and, as a leader, he has exercised a potent and enduring influence on the National Church. Probably the best short account of his career is that by T. G. Law in "*Collected Essays and Reviews,*" which is included as an introductory memoir in *Craig's Catechism* edited in facsimile by Law from the original edition of 1581.

Craig's life, to recapitulate briefly, all but spanned the sixteenth century. Scion of country gentry originally hailing from Buchan, but whose strongest roots around this time were in the Capital, he was trained for the Church, and rose to become Rector of the Dominican Priory of Bologna—quite a considerable appointment. Won over to Reformation principles through the study of Calvin's Institutes, Craig, after exciting adventures, returned to Scotland towards the end of 1560, and at once associated himself with Knox and his brother Reformers. His gifts of scholarship and leadership being soon recognised, he was for over a year minister of the Canongate and thereafter Knox's right hand man at St. Giles', continuing there until 1572. It proved a formidable partnership, broken only through the dissensions and bitterness engendered in the ranks of the Reformers, because of the civil war. Translated to Aberdeen in 1573, Craig ministered for six useful years at the town kirk, and he probably taught Divinity at the University for at least part of that time. Professor John Johnston of St. Andrews University, who was reared at or near Aberdeen and who attended its University, calls Craig his teacher—"qui Doctor quondam meus."² It was at Aberdeen that Craig wrote and used his "*A Shorte Summe of the Whole Catechisme,*" already referred to.

¹ *Op. cit.* pp. 17, 18, 68, 74-76.

² *Johnston's Latin Poems*, pp.28-30. MS. National Library, Edinburgh.

Recalled to Edinburgh in 1579, he was appointed second chaplain to King James, holding this position until his death during December, 1600. He was expert in canon and civil law, hence his intimate association with most of the General Assemblies of the period; and he was thrice Moderator. Craig married, and had several of a family, his only son William, a brilliant youth, being an associate at Saumar of Robert Boyd of Trochrig who, in his works, makes several references to him. Craig's widow, who was considerably younger than himself, survived him for many years.

John Craig received a call to St. Giles' during the spring of 1562. The Edinburgh Town Council Minute of 8th April, reads as follows:—

“The Council understanding the tedious and heavy labours sustained by their minister, John Knox, in preaching thrice in the week, and twice on the Sunday, ordains unanimously to solicit and persuade Master John Craig, presently minister of the Canongate, to accept upon him the half charge of the preaching in the said Kirk of Edinburgh, for such good deed as they can agree upon.”¹

The General Assembly which met in Edinburgh, on June 29th, 1562, homologated Craig's appointment. The minute of their fourth sederunt of July 2nd, states that “It was ordained that Mr. Craig should be joined with Mr. Knox in the ministry of Edinburgh;” and it also observes that “the harvest is great, but the labourers are few.”² It was due to this scarcity of ordained men that Craig was delegated at the same time, along with David Lindsay of Leith, to teach in the unplanted kirks of the Merse, for a month each.³

At St. Giles', the new minister preached the great truths about God and man, relating these truths with perception, to the events of the time. Nor did he always please his hearers, any more than did John Knox. Occasionally, there were noisy protests against his preaching, particularly from courtiers. He narrowly escaped being knifed in his pulpit, when a soldier of the royal guard, possibly with some court connivance, struck at him with a dagger. This act, if inspired from Holyroodhouse, would be done to scare the preacher, rather than inflict bodily harm. Sir John Foster, the English ambassador, mentions the incident in a letter sent to Cecil on 8th May, 1566. Craig was also assaulted in the High Street, at a spot not far from St. Giles', by one George Coutts. A Town Council Minute of 20th June, 1567, reads:—

¹ *Burgh Records of Edinburgh (1557-1571)*.

² Calderwood, Vol. 2, p. 186.

³ *B. U. K.*, p. 18.

“The provost, bailies, and council ordain John Harwood, treasurer, to deliver George Coutts, now being imprisoned in the thieves hole for his contempt done to Master John Craig, minister, the sum of 12/6d.: and ordains him to be taken from prison and conveyed to Leith and shipped from there by two officers, and this in respect of our Sovereign’s writing obtained to that effect . . .”¹

Three weeks after the General Assembly had approved of Craig’s appointment to St. Giles’, the Town Council engaged his services, and those of Spottiswoode, the Superintendent of Lothian, to examine the scholastic qualifications of their Grammar School head-master, William Robertson.² Trouble had been brewing between members of the Town Council and Robertson for some time. John Mescrop, Procurator of Edinburgh, had laid complaints against him in the Council, alleging his incompetence to teach Latin and Greek. The examiners got to work with alacrity, and reported on 3rd October, that Robertson wasn’t fit to teach these subjects. He was dismissed, but the case dragged on for years through the intervention of Queen Mary on his behalf. Robertson remained of the unreformed faith and, while he was doubtless a misfit, he would be considered as unsuitable to teach children in the new religious situation.

Dr. Thomas M’Crie states that Craig was not inducted to St. Giles’ until the summer of 1563, because of difficulties relating to the settlement of his stipend. But from a close study of the Burgh Records of Edinburgh, it is evident that M’Crie is in error. He quotes as his authority for the delayed induction, a town Council Minute of 18th June, 1563, giving in full the content of this Minute in support of his theory. But the Minute which he really produces is not that of 18th June, 1563, but that of 19th June, 1562, a Minute which was simply supplementing that of April 8th of the same year. It is:—

“The provost and council after long reasoning upon the necessity of ministers find there shall be another minister elected by the provost . . . and elders of this burgh, and joined to Knox, minister, and for the sustaining of them both, together with John Cairns, reader, ordain that the bailies each within his own quarter, to convene the merchants and require of every one of them what they will give quarterly for the cause of the aforesaid; and likewise the said deacons to convene their crafts, and report their answers upon Wednesday next.”³

¹ *Burgh Records of Edinburgh, 1557-1571.*

² *Ibid.*, July 22, 1562.

³ *Burgh Records*, June 19, 1562. M’Crie misquotes this as June 18, 1563. There is no such Minute.

These officials duly reported on the day specified that

“If my lord provost, bailies . . . would appoint a special sum in the year for the said ministers—Knox and Craig—they and their crafts would gladly consent . . . to give a fifth of the whole . . .”¹

It is true, however, as M’Crie says, that John Craig has considerable difficulty in obtaining his stipend. Even the reader, John Cairns, seems to have been similarly neglected. Hence we learn that

“the council understanding that this half year past there has been no manner of provision made nor support given to John Craig, minister, and John Cairns, reader, neither touching their sustentation nor otherwise; wherefore they ordain persons . . . to pass among the faithful who have communicated, and require of them their support to the said minister and reader for a quarter of a year while it shall please God that better order may be obtained . . .”²

The “faithful”, however, were hard to move in this matter, for we find that even towards the end of November, 1563, Craig and Cairns were still without their stipends:—

“The bailies . . . after long reasoning . . . taken for the sustenance of the minister’s reader and other officers of the Kirk . . . conclude that there shall be gathered from every “fired” house 4/- in the year . . . ; and this to be done with diligence because the said minister and reader have been without their stipend for the most part of a year past.”³

Stipend problems apart, it is quite clear from these references that Craig was one of the ministers of St. Giles’ as from the summer of 1562.

Knox was itinerating during the autumn of 1562, having been appointed by the General Assembly of 25th June, to visit the churches of the West country where he conducted a teaching ministry in Nithsdale and Galloway and Kyle. It was during this tour when Knox was at Maybole, that he engaged in disputation with that able champion of the unreformed Church, Quintin Kennedy, Abbot of Crossraguel. Meanwhile, Craig and his reader continued to exercise a vigorous ministry in Edinburgh during Knox’s absence, who, having strengthened the Reformed Church in the west returned to the Capital; and from thence at the beginning of the following year, he proceeded to Jedburgh, dealing principally with the

¹ *Burgh Records*, June 24, 1562. M’Crie misquotes this as June, 18, 1563. There is no such Minute.

² *B. R. E.*, June 11, 1563.

³ *Ibid.*, November 26, 1563.

case of Paul Methven.¹ It was through Craig being at St. Giles that Knox had greater freedom of movement to prosecute his missionary work than he otherwise would have had.

At the General Assembly which met on Christmas Day, 1563, Knox and Craig shared in an unusual yet significant proceeding with regard to the erring wife of John Baron, minister of Graston. Mrs. Baron had deserted her husband and gone off to England, and Craig, Knox and a few others were instructed to send and subscribe a letter to the Archbishops of York and Canterbury, desiring them to apprehend her and return her to Scotland, that she might be dealt with by John Spottiswoode for her moral lapse.²

Craig hadn't been very long at St. Giles' before he said something in public utterance that mightily offended the Court and several of the high nobility. In a forthright sermon, he denounced the corrupt practices of those in authority, Knox considering the pith of what Craig said well worth recording:—

“Sometimes hypocrites were known by their disguised habits. We had men to be monks and women to be nuns. But now, we cannot discern the earl from the abbot, nor the nun from the noble-woman. But seeing that you are not ashamed of that profession, would to God you had therewith the cowl, the veil, and the rest belonging thereto, that you might appear in your true colours.”³

Kirkwood Hewat considers that Craig was simply protesting against the rapacity of the nobles. Craig had this in view, no doubt, but his thrust went far deeper—they were directed against certain Lords of the Congregation for what the preacher considered their betrayal of Reformation principles. At Craig's penetrating words, Secretary Maitland who had been among the courtiers present, became very angry. In recent months he had been drifting from the side of the Reformers, linking himself more and more with the interests of his royal mistress. Stamping out of church in a great rage, he was heard to say that he “gave himself to the Devil, if after that day he should regard what became of the ministers; but should do what he could that his companions might have a part with him. And,” concluded he, “let them bark and blow as they list.”⁴ Thereafter there arose whisperings and complaints by all the flatterers of the Court, grumbling that men's persons were so particularly described, that all the

¹ *John Knox*—M'Crie, pp. 192-200 (1853 edit.).

² *B. U. K.*, p. 42.

³ *Knox's Works*—Dickinson, Vol. 2, p. 104.

⁴ *Ibid.*

world might take notice of whom the preaching was meant, for, said, they, "Might not sins be referred to in general, albeit that men were not so specially taxed that all the world might know of whom the preacher spoke?" To which the Reformers retorted:—

"Let men be ashamed to offend publicly, and then preachers shall abstain from particular description, but so long as Protestants are not ashamed to manifestly do against the Evangel of Jesus Christ, so long cannot the ministers of God cease to cry out that God will be revenged upon such abusers of His Holy Word."¹

Knox was more than pleased with the stand taken by his colleague: "that worthy servant of God," is his approving comment. Craig's public rebuke to certain of the courtiers could not have been more timely. For some months, Maitland had been trying hard, and by the subtlest of means, to have John Knox imprisoned. But to the great chagrin of the Queen, this move had failed.

The General Assembly which opened on June 25, 1564, found Craig at the centre of affairs as a member of its business committee.² He was again commissioned to visit the Merse kirks for a month, while Knox was appointed to engage in similar work north of the Forth. The Town Council Minute of August 18, 1564, states that

"The provost, bailies . . . understanding that by command of the Kirk, John Knox and John Craig, are instantly to depart, the one to the north and the other to the south parts for the preaching of the Gospel . . . and that it is appointed that Christopher Goodman, minister of St. Andrews, shall abide and remain in these parts (Edinburgh) until they return, to minister and preach in their place . . . ordain Master John Spens . . . to offer him in their names honourable entertainment . . ."³

Goodman was the obvious choice to act as locum tenens; for Craig and Knox knew that he was not the man to be led astray by Maitland and his fraternity. At the previous General Assembly, Goodman had quarrelled sharply with the Secretary about the distribution of the "thirds" of benefices.⁴

That both the ministers of St. Giles' were able to leave Edinburgh simultaneously would seem to point to the growing strength and confidence of the Reformed Church. Such indeed was the case, being the result of a

¹ *Knox*—Dickinson, II, p. 104.

² *B. U. K.*, p. 50.

³ *B. R. E.*, 1557-1571.

⁴ *Church of Scotland*—Lee, I, p. 255.

conference between commissioners chosen for the purpose by the General Assembly, and a number of government officials whose chief spokesman appears to have been Maitland. Although he, following upon Craig's outspoken sermon, had sworn to have nothing to do with the ministers and to influence others accordingly, and had seen to it that none of the Queen's representatives attended the opening of the Assembly, he and they had appeared at its sederunt of the following day.¹ In an effort to compose growing differences among the Reformed party, a conference was arranged, and during its progress there arose a prolonged debate between Maitland and Knox on the extent and validity of royal claims. Both men argued skilfully and at great length, with evenness of temper and indeed, high spirits, and later in the proceedings, Craig who was present gave valuable help to his colleague. Maitland was surrounded with a formidable array of nobles including Chatelherault, the Earls of Moray, Morton and Argyll, whils Knox had, besides Craig, the support of Willock and Row.² The gathering had been convened to debate the pros and cons of the Queen's Mass, but it soon became apparent that because of this, much deeper issues were involved. According to Knox's detailed account of the proceedings—the careful reporting showing how important he considered the whole debate—the conference resolved into a hotly contested argument between Maitland and the Reformer on the prerogatives of monarchs and the rights of the Reformed community. Said the Secretary, "Then will you, make subjects to control their princes and rulers?" "And what harm," replied Knox, "should the Commonwealth receive, if the corrupt affections of ignorant rulers were moderated, and so bridled, by the wisdom and discretion of godly subjects, that they should do wrong or violence to no man?" Maitland seems to have felt himself somewhat cornered here, for he told Knox quite tartly that they were presently in committee for a specific purpose, namely ought or ought not the Queen to have her Mass. However, Knox held to his point and had the other admit that if the Queen were to be a persecutor of her godly subjects, he would be as ready as any within the kingdom to oppose her. Maitland did not believe, as he said, that the Queen's "idolatry should be laid to our charge." "Idolatry ought not only to be suppressed," replied the other, "but the idolator ought to die the death." Maitland admitted this, though he added, "but by whom?" "By the people," was the daring reply. To Maitland, the Queen's life was inviolate, for did she not as chief magistrate owe her appointment to God? She was His chosen, His anointed ruler, and only God could chastise her.³ Knox viewed these

¹ *Knox*—Dickinson, II, p. 107.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

³ *Knox*—Dickinson, II, 108-134.

matters quite differently. He had puzzled over the relations of Church and State for many years. As early as 1554, we find him in earnest correspondence with Bullinger about these, among the questions asked being "Whether obedience is to be rendered to a magistrate who enforces idolatry and condemns true religion . . . ?"¹ Ten years later, Maitland found himself debating with a man who had made up his mind on this very issue. As Stalker says, "The ripening process may be seen going on in such productions of his—Knox's—pen, between these two dates, as his Appellation to the Nobility and his Letter to the Commonality of Scotland, . . . and especially in a series of proclamations which he sent out, in the name of the Lords of the Congregation, during the progress of the civil war waged with Mary of Guise."²

Both Thomas M'Crie and Stalker affirm that Knox had substantially the same or similar political opinions as George Buchanan. But the latter's standpoint here seems to me to be closer to Craig's than to that of Knox. Knox did not see government as simply a covenant between prince and people. To him it was a divine arrangement for the preservation of order in human affairs, and for making it possible to live righteously, and hard to live unrighteously. Princes for such an ordering of affairs have to be of a serious mind, because God has committed a great trust to them. They have to be parents and shepherds of the people, and their honour lies in making prosperous and progressive those they govern. These ideas may be commonplace to-day, but they sounded novel to sixteenth century ears. Maitland was typical of the orthodox ruling class of the time who measured authority by a very different standard. Not the duties of princes but their prerogatives were what mattered. At this conference Maitland more or less upheld the doctrine of the divine right of kings, persistence in which was yet to be the death of the Stuarts.

To Knox, for whom there seemed to be little or no distinction between religion and politics, in a monarchical State, the covenant relationship was not simply that of between prince and people, but rather that of between God and the prince. If the prince broke the covenant by not promoting religion and virtue, but rather fostered superstition and encouraged immorality, then there existed a remedy. The appeal first would be to the nobility. Said Knox to them, ". . . ye are bound to correct and repress whatsoever ye know him—the prince—to attempt expressly repugning to God's Word, honour and glory, or what ye shall espy him to do, be it by ignorance or be it by malice, against his subjects

¹ *John Knox*—Stalker, p. 167.

² *Ibid.*, 168.

great or small."¹ But if nobles as well as the chief magistrate should fail in their duty, there was still a recourse in the people themselves. This he propounded vigorously in the Letter to the Commonality of Scotland.²

But to return to the Knox and Maitland debate. The Secretary, growing weary of their endless reasoning at cross-purposes, demanded that the questions discussed should be put to the vote. Knox was against this being done, thus following the express command of the General Assembly then in session. At length it was agreed that the opinions of all present should be given. Douglas of St. Andrews University, with whom agreed Winram the Superintendent, said in effect that the Queen should have her Mass, though, if she openly opposed the Reformed religion, its professors had every right to resist her.³ Other Reformers present were certain that the Queen ought to be deprived of hearing Mass, for "that by so doing men did no more wrong to the Queen's Majesty than those who should by force take from her a poisoned cup when she is going to drink it."⁴ This extreme position, be it noted, was identical to that taken by the Papacy itself when dealing with heretical princes. In support of his thesis, Cardinal Allen used similar arguments and employed the same Scriptures as Knox did at this conference.⁵

John Craig, on being asked for his judgment and vote, replied :

"I will gladly show unto your honours what I understand ; but I greatly doubt whether my knowledge or conscience shall satisfy you, seeing that you have heard so many reasons and are so little moved by them. But yet I shall not conceal from you my judgment, adhering first to the protestation of my Brother—Knox—to wit, 'that our voting prejudice not the liberty of the General Assembly.' I was (said he) in the University of Bologna, in the year of God 1554, where, in the place of the Black Friars of the same town, I saw in the time of their General Assembly this Conclusion set forth : 'That is, All Rulers, be they supreme or be they inferior, may and ought to be reformed or deposed by them by whom they are chosen, confirmed, or admitted to their office, as oft as they break that promise made by the oath to their subjects : Because that their Prince is no less bound by oath to the subjects, than are the subjects to their Prince, and therefore ought to be kept and reformed equally, according to the law and condition of the oath that is made of either party.'

¹ *Knox*—Laing, IV, 480, 493.

² *Ibid.*, IV, 534, 526.

³ *Knox*—Dickinson, II, 108-134.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Sincere and Modest Defence of English Catholics*, pp. 79, 89, *et seq.*

“ This Conclusion, my Lords, I heard sustained and concluded, as I have said, in a most notable auditory. The sustainer was a learned man, Magister Thomas de Finola, the Rector of the University, a famous man in that country. Magister Vicentius de Placentia affirmed the Conclusion to be most true and certain, agreeable both with the law of God and man. The occasion of this disputation and conclusion was a certain disorder and tyranny that was attempted by the Pope’s governors, who began to make innovations in the country against the laws that were before established, alleging themselves not to be subject to such laws, by reason that they were not instituted by the people, but by the Pope, who was King of that country ; and therefore they, having full commission and authority of the Pope, might alter and change statutes and ordinances of the country without all consent of the people. Against this their usurped tyranny, the learned and the people opposed themselves openly: and when that all reasons which the Pope’s governors could allege were heard and confuted, the Pope himself was feign to take up the matter, and to promise to keep not only the liberty of the people, but also that he should neither abrogate any law or statute, neither yet make any new law without their own consent. And, therefore, my Lord (said he, addressing Maitland), my vote and conscience is, that princes are not only bound to keep laws and promises to their subjects, but also, that in case they fail, they justly may be deposed; for the band between the Prince and the people is reciprocal.”¹

Then up started a claw-back of that corrupt court, writes Knox and said (words, really, which were quite to the point):

“Ye wat not what ye say; for ye tell us what was done in Bologna: we are a kingdom, and they are but a commonwealth.”

The interrupter wasn’t quite correct; for since 1513, Bologna had ceased to be a city state, being now governed by a papal deputy.

“My Lord, (said Craig), “my judgment is, that every kindgom is, or at least, should be a commonwealth, albeit that every commonwealth be not a kingdom; and therefore, I think, that in a kingdom no less diligence ought to be taken, that laws be not violated, than is in a commonwealth; because that the tyrranny of princes who continually reign in a kingdom, is more hurtful to the subjects, than is the misgovernment of those that from year to year are changed in free commonwealths. But yet, my Lords, to assure you

¹ *Knox*—*Dickinson*, II, 131 f.

and all others further, that head was disputed to the uttermost; and then, in the end, it was concluded that they spake not such things as were done in divers kingdoms and nations by tyranny and negligence of people. 'But we conclude,' said they, 'what ought to be done in all kingdoms and commonwealths, according to the law of God, and unto the just laws of men. And if by negligence of the people, or by tyranny of princes, contrary laws have been made, yet may that same people or their posterity, justly crave all things to be reformed, according to the original institution of kings and commonwealths; and such as will not do so, deserve to eat the fruit of their own foolishness.'¹

Mackinnon in his *History of Modern Liberty*, considers Knox's arguments here to be less convincing than Craig's.² Knox to him—Mackinnon—is the theocrat who spoke in the language of the democrat. Whereas Craig, who certainly was a greater student of law than the other, stated his convictions in less theological and more convincing terms. It has to be remembered that Craig was for upwards of twenty-five years, a prominent citizen of Bologna, the great mediaeval centre of Canon and Civil Law. Its traditions were still republican and, it is obvious from this conference, that Craig was not unsympathetic towards them. But later on in life, he was to become much more of king's man. Stalker has this to say about the conference:

"The constitutional idea embodied in the title of the treatise of Samuel Rutherford on Government, which is one of the landmarks in history of politics—*Lex Rex*—was not unknown in the days of Knox."³

At any rate, Knox and Craig were sufficiently close in their political views to present a united front. If Maitland and the party for which he was the mouthpiece had hoped to divide the Reformers on this fundamental issue, they were mistaken. Craig, apparently, made no comment on the "abomination" of the Queen's Mass, but his statesman-like citation of the reasoned opinions of the two Latin jurists, shows that he was in the main in agreement with Knox and his colleagues. Principal Story's comment is that "the men who could uphold these principles, in days so perilous to order and freedom, were not only Reformers of the Kirk—they were the nursing fathers of our civil liberties, and assertors of the rights of manhood."⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, 133.

² *Op. cit.* II, 457-8.

³ *Knox*—Stalker, p. 178.

⁴ *John Craig*—Story, p. 35.

At the General Assembly of June, 1565, Craig was on the business committee which met each morning from 6 to 8. He and a few others were appointed to collect causes for a public fast, and they duly reported that this should be engaged in. Knox and Craig were commissioned to set down the form of exercise to be used, and to have it printed by Lekprevik. Calderwood says that this treatise on fasting was preserved in several editions of the Scottish Psalter even into the seventeenth century. The Assembly which met in December of the same year, approved the work of Craig and Knox, and ordained the Fast to be kept over two Sundays of Lent. Among other things, all games were forbidden to be played on these two dates, but this was but incidental to the real reason for the exercise.

This was to pinpoint the growing opposition to their Reformed Church: "Strength and friends, honour and blood joined with godliness, are fallen before our eyes. Men had before hope (or at least some opinion), that God should move the Queen's Majesty's heart to hear the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ truly preached and so, consequently that she should abandon all idolatry and false religion. But now she hath given answer in plain words, that the religion in which she hath been nourished (and that is mere abomination), she will maintain and defend . . . That Idol the Mass is now again in divers places erected."

That Craig's library continued to grow is shown from an interesting entry for this year, in the *Edinburgh Dean of Guild's Accounts* "ITEM. 7th November, 1565; for two broad planks (of wood) which I cut and gave to Master John Craig, minister, with which he desired to make shelves and rests for his books, price of piece 5/3 . . . ITEM. For bearing them from Leith to the said Master John's house—7d."¹

During this summer, Knox was in trouble for tactlessly preaching in St. Giles' before the newly-married Darnley that "God sets in that room (authority), for the offences and ingratitude of the people, boys and women."² Spottiswoode says that "when Mr. Knox was silenced, his colleague (Mr. Craig), because of Knox's prohibition, refused to do any service in Edinburgh, which put the people in a stir; yet upon better advice, he was moved to continue in his charge."³ According to a Town Council Minute, they loyally supported their ministers in this issue.⁴ The Reformed Kirk of Scotland was fortunate in having the support of the middle classes in the principal towns, the influence and strength of

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 219.

² *Diurnal of Occurrents*, p. 79; *Knox—Laing*, II, 219.

³ *Wodrow Selections—Lippe*, p. 8.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, 23rd August, 1565.

whom the politicians consistently underestimated. They played a decisive part on its behalf during the civil war of 1570-72.

A momentous event during this year, 1565, was the appearance of the completed Psalter for use in the Reformed Church. There are reasons for believing that in this Liturgy cum Psalter, Craig was author of fifteen of its psalm-versions and, that these include the familiar second versions of Psalms 102, 136, 143 and 145.¹ In all probability, Craig was a member of the select committee set up by the General Assembly during 1562 to go into this whole question of the Liturgy. Millar Patrick says that

“Knox’s pre-eminent share in these proceedings warrants the belief that he was a member of the committee on the Psalms . . . Who his collaborators were upon the Psalter is not told us, but the identity of them stands beyond question, for they were the only Scottish contributors of the new version—Robert Pont and John Craig.”²

David Laing is a bit sceptical of Craig’s authorship of the psalms mentioned, following Baillie’s reservation that they were “supposed” to belong to the Reformer. Certainly, only the tantalizing initials “I.C.” are appended to these psalms, and might equally be Knox’s (Latinised) or John Carswell’s, or those of some lesser known member of the Reformed Church. However, the name of Pont, whom Baillie affirms contributed translations of six of the psalms in the version, is likewise never given in full—Psalms 57, R.P., 59, R.P., 76 R.Po., 80, “R.T.”, and 81, R.Po. This indicates that both Scottish contributors had simply appended their initials. Baillie boldly supplies the names of the English contributors, yet in the Psalter itself we are faced with the like problem of identification—Norton is always “T.N.” or simply “N.” and so on. It would appear, then, that Scottish tradition named John Craig as author of the fifteen psalms, but that Baillie hadn’t taken pains to check the claim. However, it is well-nigh a certainty that, whoever contributed these fifteen psalms between the years 1562-64, was a member of the Reformed Church of Scotland. Concerning the 1565 Scottish Psalter Baillie says that “there were added for the first time, six (psalms) by Robert Pont, and fifteen bearing the initials ‘I.C.’ as the translator.” Whoever, then, translated these between 1562-64, if it be not John Craig? for the few prominent ministers and laymen of the time with identical initials—John Carswell, Knox (Latinised form), John Cairns, St. Giles’ Reader, John Cathcart of Carlton, James Chalmers of Garthgirth and the like—have much less valid claim to their authorship than him. For want of more or better evidence, Craig would

¹ *Letters and Journals*—Baillie, III, 527.

² *Scottish Psalmody*—Patrick, p. 46.

seem to be the man. He had been for years a Dominican friar in an important position, and among other things, would be well-versed in the words and music of the Latin prose psalms. He belonged to a family with distinctly poetical gifts, his nephew the legal expert,, being a poet of no mean order.¹ Craig's own son William is credited with being a writer of Latin verse; and Wodrow affirms that he was the author of "orationes et poemata."² This, of course, is no direct proof that John Craig had poetic gifts. However, it has to be borne in mind that he was an excellent scholar, a writer of splendid prose, and a cosmopolitan of rare and wide culture. In a work, the kind of man who would have found the translation of Latin psalms into his mother tongue a pleasurable and rewarding experience. The psalms which we may credit to his pen are numbers 24, 56, 75, 102, 105, 108, 110, 117, 118, 132, 136, 140, 141, 143, and 145. The following verses are examples of their style:

(a) Psalm 24, v. 7—

"Exalte your heads ye Gates on hie
Ye doores that last for aye,
Be lift: so the king of Glorie
Shal through you make this waye."

(b) Psalm, 136, v. 1—

"All fleshe in earth abrode,
With fude he doth fulfill.
Wherefore of heaven the God
To laude, be it your will.
For certainly
His mercies dure,
Both ferme and sure
Eternally."

(c) Psalm 145, v. 1—

"O Lord, that art my God and king,
Undoubtedly I will the praise,
I will extoll and blyssingis sing,
Unto thine haly name always."³

In the opinion of Millar Patrick, Craig's versions vary much in quality, but the second version of Psalm 145, which still remains second only to Kethe's rooth in use and honour, is a conclusive evidence of his powers.

¹ *Sir Thomas Craig*—Tytler, p. 137.

² *History of the University of Edinburgh*—Dalzel, p. 373. *Wodrow Selections*—Lippe, p. 56.

³ *Knox's Liturgy and Psalter*, 1587 (being a reprint of 1565)—New College Library, Edinburgh.

The Public Fast, whose form Knox and Craig had prepared, was all but ended, when Riccio was brutally done to death. While there seems to be no proof that the two events were in any way connected, 12 days later, that is, March 21st, 1565, Randolph wrote to Cecil acquainting him with the facts of the murder, and appending a list of the chief conspirators, beneath whose names, a line lower down, were those of "John Knox and John Craig, preachers."¹ The letter concludes: "all these were at the death of Davy and privy thereunto, and are now in displeasure with the Q. and their houses taken and spoiled . . ." Knox had quickly slipped out of Edinburgh after the murder, though Craig remained, but there is no evidence that their houses were wrecked. Queen Mary, now for the moment all-powerful, issued through her Privy Council a list of those implicated, and it surely bespeaks the innocence of Knox and Craig that they are not mentioned. Hume Brown contends that they had "neither art nor part" in the lawless deed. Randolph, therefore, seems to have been misinformed about the two Reformers or, their signatures on the incriminating document were forged by a later hand.²

The General Assembly met during June, 1566, and we learn that "the invocation of the name of God was made by Mr. John Craig, minister of Edinburgh."³ He served on a select committee which considered a crave from the excommunicated Paul Methven, onetime minister of Jedburgh. The crave that he should be heard by the General Assembly was granted, who, "shortly after . . . prescribed to him the form of his declaration of repentance." It was so severe, indeed, vindictive, that the wretched man failed to go through with it all.⁴ However, if the Reformers were harsh in their strictures against Queen Mary, the Court and the politicians, they were equally hard on their own offending members and ministers.

Craig presented a personal petition to the General Assembly of June, 1566. He desired that "John Cairns who had read prayers and exhorted four years and more in Edinburgh, and had well profited, might be joined with him in the Kirk of Edinburgh, in respect he was alone."⁵ The Assembly ordered the church of Edinburgh, with the assistance of John Spottiswoode, to consider the matter. Apparently the crave was not granted for, Cairns's name appears in Town Council Minutes for many years afterwards as simply that of "reader". He is first mentioned in these Minutes as minister (and so thereafter) on 13th November, 1584, and in that of 15th

¹ *Calendar of State Papers (Scottish Series)*, II, p. 270.

² *Knox*—Hume Brown, II, pp. 304-310 (Appendix, D).

³ *B. U. K.*, p. 77.

⁴ *Knox*—M'Crie, p. 200. *Works*—Dickinson, II, p. 188.

⁵ *History*—Keith, I, p. 560. (1734 edition). *Church of Scotland*—Lee, I, p. 280.

July, 1586, as "ane of the ordinar ministers of this burgh . . ." This independent action on Craig's part, might be construed as being disloyal to Knox still absent from Edinburgh but, at this time, Craig, besides his General Assembly work, was in sole charge at St. Giles' and urgently in need of ordained assistance.

This same General Assembly instructed Craig and Spottiswoode to interview the Queen who was then resident in the Castle. An audience being granted, they presented to her a supplication for the payment of ministers' stipends due them out of the Thirds of benefices. Mary received the two representatives graciously, promising that "she would take sufficient order therein, so soon as the Nobility and Council might convene," wrote Knox.¹ Mary's expansive mood must have passed quickly, for little or nothing was done; the coffers were probably empty. Lord Eustace Percy states categorically that

"Mary, whatever her virtues, was no economist. Her mother had ended by barely balancing the royal budget; she ran heavily into debt. That was the background of all the pulpit denunciation of Court frivolity."²

In this last sentence, Percy does less than justice to the Reformers. They had a genuine abhorrence of vice be it found in their own circle or outside of it.

Following upon the castle interview it would appear that, Craig had made a favourable impression on Queen Mary for, early in the autumn, he appeared on behalf of the Crown at the Town Council meeting of 13th September, 1566. The Minute states that

"In the presence of the bailies and council, compeared Master John Craig, minister, and presented to them our Sovereign's writing subscribed, and desired the same to be registered in the books of this burgh, the principal to be given to him again; which the said bailies and council thought reasonable, ordained the same to be registered, and the principal to be delivered to the aforesaid minister, of which writing the tenor is as follows: 'Regina. Forasmuch we are informed by faithful persons, that adultery, fornication, open harlotry, and other filthy lusts of the flesh are committed and suffered in Edinburgh without any punishment, to the grest dishonour of our God, to the slander of the whole realm, to the manifest contempt of our laws and authority, therefore we charge the provost, bailies and council . . . that you with all

¹ *Knox*—Dickinson, II, p. 187.

² *Knox*—E. Percy, p. 371.

diligence from time to time inquire, search out, and take all such public slanderers and filthy persons and punish them according to the Act of our last parliament without any exception of persons. At Stirling, given under our signet, and subscribed with our hand, the last day of August and of our reign the 24th year. Etsic subscribitur Marie, R."¹

In view of what transpired in the Queen's own life but a few months later, these words are charged with special significance.

The next General Assembly convened during December, 1566, at which a letter, headed by the signature of John Craig, was sent to "their brethren the bishops and pastors of God's Church in England, who profess with us in Scotland, the truth of Jesus Christ."² This was a strongly worded plea on behalf of certain Anglican ministers who scrupled about the new royal decree ordering the clergy to don canonical vestments, and it goes on to say that

"If surplice, corner-cap and tippet, have been the badges of idolators . . . what hath the preachers of Christian Liberty to do with the dregs of that Romish beast? . . . We return to our former request, which is, that the brethren among you who refuse the Romish rags, may find of you, who use and urge them, such favour as our Head and Master commandeth each one of his members to show to one another . . ."³

The plea availed nothing for, Elizabeth would not listen to the supplications of her bishops. Knox, who bore this letter with him on his protracted English visit, which this Assembly authorised, was to write later of the Queen of England: "She that now reigns over them is neither good Protestant, nor yet resolute Papist; let the world judge which is the third."⁴ That Craig's name appears at the top of the signatures on the letter, would seem to indicate that at Knox's request, he had assumed the leadership of the Scottish Reformers during the absence of his colleague.

¹ *Burgh Records of Edinburgh*, 1557-71.

² *Knox—Dickinson*, II, p. 199.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 200. *Calderwood*, II, p. 335.

⁴ *John Knox—M'Crie*, p. 295.

